

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the previous amendments and the following remarks.

Before discussing the subject matter recited in the claims of this application and as a preface to commenting on the issues raised in the most recent Official Action, the following general overview is provided of features and operational characteristics associated with a substrate storage container according to embodiments described and illustrated in the present application.

A substrate storage container can include at least one support piece which is tightly fitted from one side of an opening of attachment cylinder toward an other side thereof so that a portion of the at least one support piece projects out from the other side. As discussed in lines 1-8 of page 20 of the specification, it is thus possible to improve sealing performance and help prevent air leakage.

Additionally, since the attachment cylinder is an elastomer, the attachment cylinder is tightly fitted to the attachment hole, the support piece is tightly fitted to the attachment cylinder, and the filter support structure is covered and protected by attachment cylinder, it is possible to improve sealing performance and help prevent air leakage. Moreover, since attachment cylinder is formed of an elastic material which presents flexibility and forms a seal with attachment hole, no additional sealing element such as an O-ring or the like is needed. This contributes to reduction in the number of parts and improvement in assembly work performance.

As described in lines 1-10 of page 25 of the specification, the substrate storage container can also include rear grooves for supporting substrates formed at the interior backside of the container body, the sectional shape of each rear groove

being configured to be asymmetrical with respect to the center line of a substrate when the substrate is placed horizontally, and front grooves for supporting substrates formed at the interior side of the door, wherein a horizontally-placed substrate is lifted up from a shelf element and held by a rear groove and a front groove when the door is closed. Since the substrates can be lifted from shelf elements when the door is closed, contact friction between substrates and shelf elements can be reduced and to help prevent pollution of substrates due to abrasive particles.

Independent Claim 8 is rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,732,877, hereinafter Wu, in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,032,802, hereinafter Ejima.

Wu discloses an air vent plug arrangement for a substrate storage container. mounted at an air vent 80 of a bottom panel 81 which includes a mounting ring 1 having a top side edge 10 fastened to the air vent 80 and a plug body 2 having a plug cap 4 thereon and a filter 5 therein. An inner ring 42 fits the inner diameter of a sidewall 22 of the plug body 2.

The Official Action takes the position that Wu's plug body 2 and inner ring 42 constitute support pieces, and that an opening at 43 corresponds to a second opening of an attachment cylinder. However, even assuming some basis exists for these interpretations, amended Claim 8 is clearly distinguishable.

Specifically, Claim 8 is amended to recite that at least one of the support pieces is tightly fitted from one side of the second opening of attachment cylinder toward an other side thereof so that a portion of the at least one of the support pieces projects out from the other side. This amendment is fully supported by this application's specification, for example, in Fig. 4 and the corresponding description in

lines 7-21 of page 18. This amendment is also fully supported by this application's specification in Fig. 7 and the corresponding description from line 17 of page 20 through line 14 of page 21, with rim portion 50 corresponding to the recited second opening.

Clearly, neither the plug body 2 nor the inner ring 42 is tightly fitted from one side of the opening at 43 to an other side thereof so that a portion of the plug body 2 or the inner ring 42 projects out from the other side, in combination with the other elements recited in amended Claim 8. Moreover, Ejima does not cure this deficiency in Wu.

Claim 8 is therefore allowable over the disclosures in Wu and Ejima, and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 8 is respectfully requested.

Claim 14, the other independent claim, is rejected as being unpatentable over Wu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,960,960, hereinafter Yamamoto.

Claim 14 is amended to recite that the substrate storage container includes rear grooves for supporting substrates formed at the interior backside of the container body, the sectional shape of each rear groove being configured to be asymmetrical with respect to the center line of a substrate when the substrate is placed horizontally, and front grooves for supporting substrates formed at the interior side of the door, wherein a horizontally-placed substrate is lifted up from a shelf element and held by a rear groove and a front groove when the door is closed. Clearly, neither Wu nor Yamamoto disclose this feature.

Claim 14 is therefore allowable over the disclosures in Wu and Yamamoto, and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 14 is respectfully requested.

The dependent claims are allowable at least by virtue of their dependence from allowable independent claims. Thus, a detailed discussion of the additional distinguishing features recited in the dependent claims is not set forth at this time.

Early and favorable action with respect to this application is respectfully requested.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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